

The Ames Intelligencer

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C.G. Lee: attorney, business leader, developer, philanthropist in early Ames

C.G. Lee was an outspoken contributor to the life of whatever community he was in, no doubt influenced by his independent-minded parents, James and Sarah Whitcomb Lee.



C.G. Lee

James was a Massachusetts Yankee whose grandfather had fought at Lexington and Concord. Sarah was related to poet James Whitcomb Riley. Like many Easterners, the Lees had come west to take advantage of the promise of good land and a better life. They settled in Jasper County, Iowa and their son, Chaucer Gory Lee, was born in 1869.

As a young man, C.G. taught school in Iowa and Nebraska before starting college in Ames. While he was a student, he was co-editor of the yearbook, *The Bomb*, in 1893 and in 1894, was editor of the college newspaper. When the first debating team was organized, he became a member, learning debating skills he would use all his life.

Lee graduated with the Class of 1894 and went on to Drake Law School, completing his work there in 1895. Within two weeks of being admitted to the bar, he went into practice with Dan McCarthy, his future father-in-law.

In 1897, C.G. married one of Dan's daughters, Emma, whom he met at I.A.C. where she was an assistant librarian.



Emma McCarthy Lee

Plunging into the life of the town, Lee helped organize the first Commercial Club in 1896, the forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce. Lee served as Ames City Attorney from 1896 to 1902, and was 11th District Judge from 1907 to 1914. In 1914, he was a candidate for the Republican nomination for governor, which he lost to incumbent Governor G.W. Clarke.

While President of the Commercial Club, the Iowa Board of Regents was formed in 1912. Several men on that Board wanted to make the University

of Iowa the dominant school and reduce I.A.C. to an all-male technical school. Alumni and friends rallied and formed an organization to oppose that action, with Lee as Chair. Their defense of the college was carried over the heads of the Regents to the Iowa Legislature. Persuasive arguments convinced the Board to withdraw their plan in 1919. Lee was famous as a courtroom attorney, known for his witty and caustic tongue. He practiced law for fifty years and retired in 1945.

In addition to his professional life as a lawyer, Lee was a real estate developer and was responsible for fifteen additions and subdivisions in the city. He built ten residences and four business buildings, one of which is the now remodeled building housing Linda Glantz Interiors at 329 Main Street. It was built originally for a Buick dealership owned by Clyde Williams and later housed Dunlap Ford before becoming a Montgomery Ward store. Lee was instrumental in the construction of the Oddfellows Building, the 1905 Armory located on Fifth Street and the Princess Theater, an early movie house.

Lee was one of several men who stimulated the construction in 1916 of a badly needed modern hotel, the Sheldon-Munn, by guaranteeing the hotel rent for ten years. He was a charter member of the Ames Golf and Country Club, established in 1911. Lee was the chosen speaker at the 1915 cornerstone-laying ceremony for the city's new Municipal Building. The construction of a "real" city hall was an exciting event for the small town. To the large crowd assembled for the dedication, Lee delivered a

lengthy speech which poked fun at town leaders while recognizing the strides the community was making. He challenged citizens to ask, "What have I done and what can I do to make Ames a better place in which to live?"

Emma was a charter member of the Ames Women's Club and the Ames Book & Basket Club, organizations which provided educational programs and service to the community. During World War I, she chaired a fund campaign to alleviate war hardships, and during the terrible flu epidemic of 1918, she was instrumental in setting up a temporary hospital to treat flu victims.



The Lees lived in the large home at 1008 Burnett, which has recently been returned to use as a residence after serving many years as the headquarters for Mainstream Living. Although C.G.'s name has faded from memory as Ames has grown, his wife's name is well-remembered through Lee's gift of a city park in her memory in west Ames, Emma McCarthy Lee Park.

When Lee passed away in 1957, he was 87 years old.



This caricature of Lee appeared in 1916.

AHA News Items

Cataloguing of House Plans

ISU history graduate student, Trevor Soderstrum, has completed an initial listing of house plans acquired several years ago from the City of Ames. He continues to add more details to the listings to provide information of interest to researchers. The plans were acquired when the City ran into storage problems and decided to discontinue their practice of retaining the plans, which are an excellent source of information about housing after the 1950's.

AHA will make copies of the plans for homeowners for a small fee.

Scanner Purchased

The Association has purchased a high quality scanner with funds remaining from the Sesquicentennial celebration in 1996. The scanner has been placed in the Iowa Room at the Ames Public Library, and will be used by Library staff to make copies for patrons of the photographs in the Farwell Brown collection. Providing immediate copies will be a great convenience to patrons and staff alike. The scanner will also be used to produce this newsletter, among other projects.

City Council Extends 97-98 Funding

In June, the Ames City Council agreed to carry over 1997-98 museum planning funding into the next fiscal year. 1997-98 funding was requested specifically to study the funding and fund-raising potential for the museum. This step in the planning will take place this fall.

Historical Displays Set

An exhibit on the early years of WOI radio is set for August in the lobby display case at Youth and Shelter Services, 420 Kellogg. The exhibit may be viewed during YSS open hours.

An exhibit about Louis Pammel, a early horticultural researcher at Iowa State will be on view in a display case at North Grand Mall in July and August. The case is located in the corridor next to Sports Page, which exits to the west parking area.

Historical Books of Interest

Published in 1998:

Iowa's Country Schools, Landmarks in Learning, edited by William Sherman; includes a county-by-county survey of country schools in Iowa; features Hoggatt School in Ames.



Published in 1998:

Antique Bottles of Iowa: 1846 - 1915, by Mike Burggraaf and Tom Southard. A detailed catalog of over 1,700 embossed bottles for every type of Iowa product with information about bottle manufacturers. Ames and Story County well represented.

Published in 1998:

Victorian Architecture in Iowa by William Plymat; overview of the best examples of the various styles accompanied by exquisite color photographs. Ames home at 829 Douglas featured in Italianate section.

Iowa Pride by Duane Schmidt features short biographies of well-known and not-so-well-known Iowa inventors and entrepreneurs, including Ames notables.

Fall 1996 Annals of Iowa (published by the State Historical Society of Iowa) features an article titled *Billy Sunday and the Mystique of the Middle West* by Robert F. Martin. Follows the life of the Ames-born evangelist as his career flourished and then "went out of style" toward the end of his life.

Iowa Trivia compiled by Alan and Ken Beck and Janice Beck Stock, features 192 pages of Q and A's revealing a number of interesting Iowa facts. Ames featured a number of times.

All books available at State Historical Museum Gift Shop, Des Moines

Wanted

For Bauge Log Home:

- Boot scraper
 - Metal-covered footlockers or trunks for mouse-proof storage
- Call Kay Beckett - 233-1695

Collections Policy In Development

AHA Board members Kay Beckett, Carol Jensen and Willie Struss are in the process of developing a policy for collection of historical items. The policy will guide the Association in defining the kinds of items that should be acquired to tell the story of Ames and local history. Beckett, Jensen and Struss have read resource materials, sought the assistance of museum professionals and used other museum policies as a guide. When complete, the policy will be used by an acquisitions committee to guide selections.

Although many in the Association are concerned that Ames has no extensive historical collection, Tom Morain, State Historical Society Director, stated recently that we are also not "burdened" by a collection which has no focus or potential use in displays.

The policy will help in defining collections specifically for Hoggatt School and the Bauge Log Home, in addition to a broader collection to tell the Ames story.

The Board will be seeking Association members for the acquisitions committee, and to begin putting some order to the small number of items that are currently owned. Any person interested in this committee, may call Kathy Svec at 232-4877.

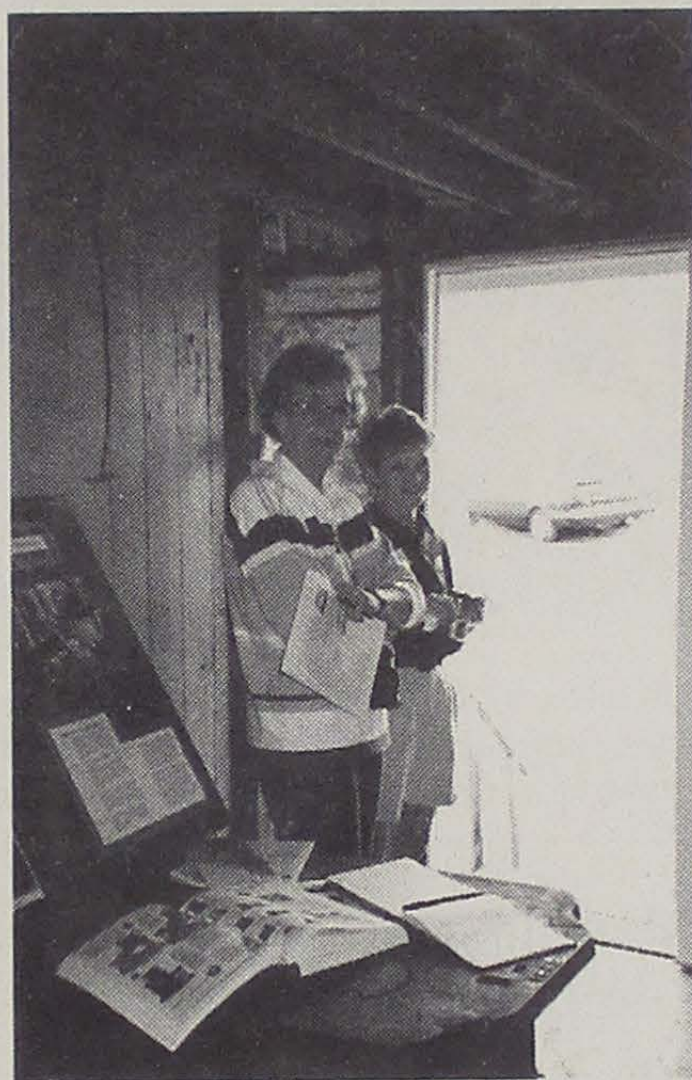
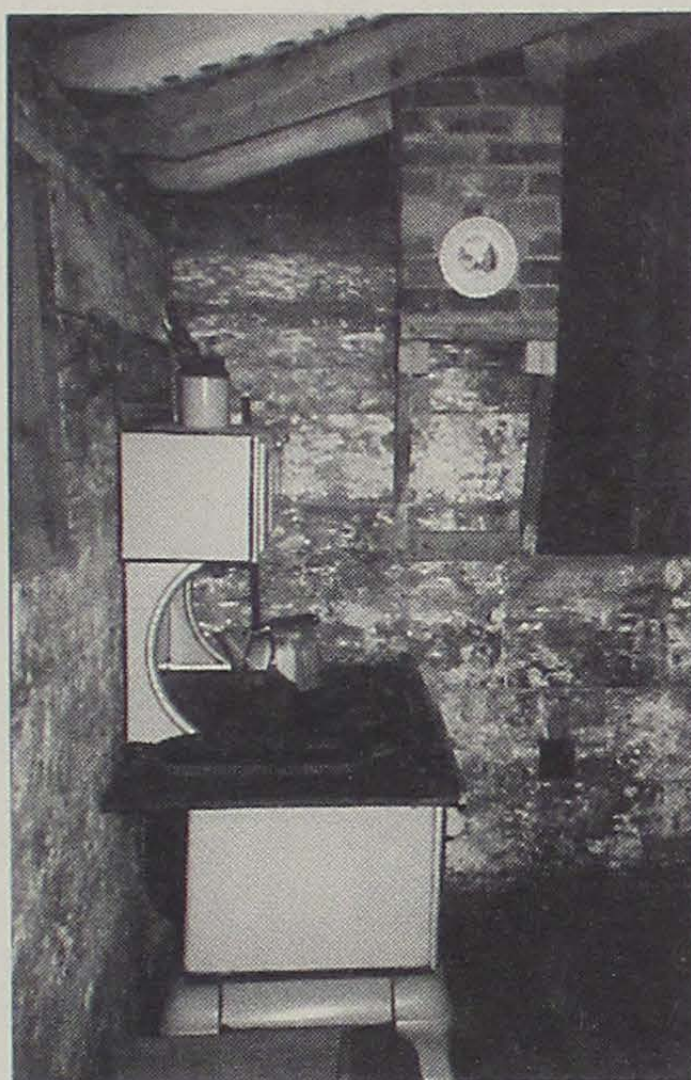
Museum Survey Set for July

The museum/cultural center planning committee is working with Iowa Field Research of Ankeny to conduct a survey in July of Ames and nearby communities. The survey will familiarize 500 local citizens with the museum and cultural center project, and ask for their opinions in several categories.

The survey is an important step in gauging support and, given a positive outcome, will give planners the information they need to proceed with developing a funding plan. In order to obtain unbiased opinions, Association members will not be eligible to participate. A separate survey for members will be administered.

May 3rd Bauge Open House During Conservation Board's Festival A Big Success

The Bauge Log Home open house hosted by AHA during the Story County Conservation Board's Festival on May 3rd was well attended, and showcased recent improvements. Visitors were able to see the chimney in the kitchen, loft stairs, and new walls in the parents' bedroom, pantry and in the lean-to. A number of furnishings were also placed for visitors to see. Prior to the open house, the home was given a thorough vacuuming, powered by the Conservation Board's portable gas generator.





This picture of the new, modern Ames City Clerk's Office was taken soon after the 1916 Municipal Building opened to serve Ames citizens. City Clerk A.B. Maxwell sits in the back, right corner. The table, center, which was used by City Council for meetings, is in the collection of the Ames Heritage Association.

Membership Current? Check Your Label!

The new membership year started on January 1, 1998. If you can't remember whether or not you have renewed, check the mailing label. Renewals received since Jan. 1 will have a 1998 date next to the name. If you haven't renewed, please take a moment to do so. **All our activities depend on you!** Memberships start at \$20. Mail to the address at the right.

Ames Heritage Association Board: Pres. Kathy Svec; Sec. Kay Beckett; Treas. Bill LaGrange; Rollie & Willie Struss, Peggy Baer, Jerry Litzell, Gary Griggs, Jonathon Brandt, Carol Jensen. Ames Heritage Association is a legally incorporated, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in state and local history through publications, programs and displays. The Board meets the 3rd Wed. of each month, September - June. The Ames Intelligencer is named after an early Ames newspaper and is published three times a year for Association members. Direct comments or questions to the Editor.

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